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ABSTRACT

The findings of the year long study by the 80 member Bicentennial Commission on the American College Fraternity are quite positive. If the prophesies come true, the American fraternity movement in the year 2000 will indeed continue to flourish as a vital and significant force in higher education. Several conclusions that express a full sense of the Commission sessions and where there is a concensus are as follows: In the year 2000, fraternities will generally be strong and vital; able to adapt themselves effectively to major changes in both higher education and in American society at large; continue to maintain some definite relationship with academic institutions; continue to affirm their essential principles and traditions; continue to be self-governing groups; center their activities in some physical locus at an institution but not necessarily a chapter house; continue to attract superior and outstanding persons; increasingly receive support through the involvement of their alumni; continue to provide important experiences in leadership training; continue to serve as important agencies for personal development; strengthen their identities as communities of shared values; continue their commitment to the ethnic of service; gradually become more diverse and heterogeneous in their memberships; continue to base their existence on the lessons of their rituals. (Author)

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TOWARD THE YEAR 2000: PERSPECTIVES ON THE AMERICAN FRATERNITY MOVEMENT

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This paper is based on a series of discussions conducted by the American College Fraternity Bicentennial Commission in Bloomington, Indiana on July 12-16 and in Williamsburg, Virginia on November 30 and December 1, 1976. The more than seventy participants included university teachers and administrators, fraternity officers and executives, and alumni and undergraduate fraternity members. The Commission was sponsored jointly by the Fraternity Executives Association and Indiana University in cooperation with the National Interfraternity Conference.

As if one bicentennial were not enough for 1976, there was yet another to be celebrated, even though it had to yield pride of place. This was the two-hundredth anniversary of the American fraternity movement, begun with the founding of Phi Beta Kappa on December 5, 1776. Although that august society has long since changed its original character, its Greek-letter descendants--now well established throughout North America--have evolved their own traditions of personal development and sound learning, of fellowship and service.

A proper commemoration of the event invites reflection on the elements that account for the remarkable longevity of the fraternity--meaning in this instance the 75 general or social fraternities for men.

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It goes without saying that the fraternity has occasioned controversy throughout much of its history, and that there are some who hesitate to take it seriously, often condescending to those who do. Yet if the fraternity really meant little more than the formalized cliquishness of privileged undergraduates and the nostalgia of sentimental alumni, as some would have it, it could not have survived the rigors of the last two centuries.

What needs to be determined is the essential, enduring worth of the fraternity. The measure of that worth is not quantity--numbers of chapters and members, rates of growth, corporate holdings--but quality as evidenced in the values, purposes, and experiences that strongly affect human lives. It must be granted that such influences are often intangible and subjective, and like other modes of education resist precise definition. All the same, whatever difference the fraternity makes during the college years and the later lives of its members can scarcely be regarded as insignificant, because it is intimately related to the central purposes of higher education itself. After two hundred years the fraternity is indeed here to stay and, as such, must be reckoned with.

Sources

When the fraternity movement advanced in earnest during the second quarter of the nineteenth century, it drew on the wisdom of Greco-Roman classicism, the curiosity of Enlightenment science, and the energy of Romantic idealism. Striving to create a model for the conduct of life, the fraternity hoped to fuse the forces of education and religion into an order that would reconcile head and heart.

Through the medium of fraternity the student sought to understand the moral issues of his own day in the light of the lessons of the past. He wanted to range far beyond the confines of the standard curriculum to apply his learning to the concrete problems of the world at large; a later generation of students would call this the search for "relevance." Because the student could seldom find in the orthodox classroom the scope or vividness he craved, he often discovered or invented it in the spirited encounters of the fraternity.

But for all the literary exercises and debates that engrossed the fraternity members of an earlier day, the main source of the fraternity's vitality was less the intensity of intellectual endeavor than the joys of fellowship, the delights of good companions, the pleasures of being among friends. (Then as now, the sense of well-being that comes naturally from the company of friends is the genius that informs the fraternity. Most of all, the experience of fraternity is, as Bernard

Berenson said of great art, "life-enhancing": it quickens and enriches one's sense of being alive.)

Even at a time when its aspirations were at their loftiest, the fraternity was obliged to recognize the contingent nature of its existence: it depended for its very life on the college where it gained its reason for being and on the youth culture that sustained it. Despite occasional attempts to achieve autonomy, the fraternity has generally accepted for what it is its unique place in the academic scheme of things. Such conditions must be taken into account because no matter how much the fraternity may have changed over the course of two centuries, it has always done so in relation to the larger changes that have occurred in American higher education and, indeed, in the society at large.

Now that the bicentenary has been observed, the next great milestone is the millenium, the advent of which should, as in the past, cause mankind to engage in much soul-searching and stock-taking. What the year 2000 may hold for the fraternity is worth considering, not only by those who already wish it well, but also by those whose overriding concern is the quality of the educational experience in general.

Gauging the Future

Even if the future cannot be foretold in precise detail, it is still useful to speculate about the critical issues that may most significantly affect the fraternity in the years to come. The major problems that have bedevilled all mankind--overpopulation, depletion of natural resources, famine, violence, social disorder, economic upheaval, ideological conflict--make whatever the fraternity may have to face seem rather small. All the same, how well the fraternity is able to anticipate the challenges of the future and respond to them is a strong indication of how wisely higher education in general is likely to deal with many of the same matters, even if on a much larger scale.

The attempt to anticipate what lies ahead for the fraternity does not, however, carry with it the requirement of having to solve potential problems in advance or of laying out any sort of master plan that would guarantee the future success of the fraternity. Moreover, lest this approach be mistaken for overreaching, ill-qualified futurism, it should be noted that what is really in question is the process of change--a phenomenon that in the modern age is characterized by both intense acceleration and complexity. Actually, the understanding of change is the purpose of this study, undertaken in the spirit of Descartes' remark, "To exist is to change, to change is to mature, and to mature is to go on creating oneself endlessly."

Early Challenges

The very idea of fraternity has been regarded by Americans with ambivalence, for as Wilson Carey McWilliams has observed, "Of all human relationships fraternity is the most premised on imperfection, the most fraught with ambiguity, the least subject to guidance by fixed rules, the most dependent on choice. All of these qualities make fraternity difficult; they also make it true to the nature of mankind."

Throughout the American experience especially there exists a tension between the need to belong to some form of community and the yearning to be utterly free and self-reliant. The vision of independence that Americans claim for themselves often portrays the loner as a romantic rebel standing against the massed forces of conformity. Yet at the same time that fraternities were coming into being in ever greater numbers, Alexis de Tocqueville sensed the flaw in the rugged individualism of American democracy: "Each man is forever thrown back on himself alone, and there is danger that he may be shut up in the solitude of his own heart."

By the middle of the nineteenth century even the most hopeful well-wisher must have doubted whether any association founded on the aristocratic values of the classical tradition could withstand the onslaught of a utilitarian democracy. Opposed by faculties who resented

any challenge to their authority and by citizens who denounced secret societies as cabalistic conspiracies, the fraternity struggled to align the academic concerns of the college with the more concretely personal concerns of the students' own lives.

Given all the vicissitudes that the fraternity has survived over the last two centuries, it is evident that the fraternity, inured as it is to crisis, is resilient and resourceful enough to adapt itself to the circumstances in which it must live.

During the last two centuries the fraternity and the college have been engaged as complementary elements in a common enterprise, although the relations between them have at times been troubled. In some institutions the fraternity has been perceived as an adversary, threatening to subvert the aims of the college; in some instances it has been treated with outright hostility and contempt; more often it has been welcomed, encouraged, and given official support. However its presence has been received, the fraternity has been an assertive force on the campus, and the very fact of its survival has shown the fraternity to be one of the most durable institutions in the history of American higher education.

Present Discontents

At present the American fraternity movement is represented at 625 of the more than 2000 academic institutions; there are now more than 4600 chapters, and fraternity membership ranges from 5 percent of the student population in some large universities to 75 percent or higher in several small colleges. Overall, the fraternity presence, at least in numerical terms, is significant but not dominant, holding in most instances a prominent if minority position in the collegiate community. Consequently, the fraternity presents itself to students as an alternative or complement to other forms of social and residential life. After years of relatively steady growth the fraternity movement was severely disrupted in the late 1960s and early '70s when students on many campuses scorned it as a particularly objectionable form of elitism. Nonetheless, the great majority of fraternity chapters survived, although the standing of the fraternity as an institution declined sharply. By the mid-seventies the fraternity reemerged as an attractive option, and once again the fraternity began to regain its prestige.

What may have changed the minds of many students was their recognition of the fraternity's serious commitment to the personal development of the individual. Whatever the reasons, the resurgence of the fraternity gives evidence of something more than a temporary

rally of support. Despite the efforts of many teachers and administrators to bring about a genuine sense of community, all too many institutions have seemed impersonal and forbidding, forcing students to fend for themselves. Periodically, reformers try to introduce new curricula, methods, and procedures in the hope that these will ensure a new dispensation of truly humane learning. It could well be that eventually, perhaps by 2000, the single most compelling concern may become: what can be done to enable each student to realize the full measure of his or her human potentiality?

THE FRATERNITY AND THE ACADEMIC COMMUNITY

Like colleges and universities, fraternities do not conform to any standard pattern. They have in common certain principles, values, and ideals--friendship, honor, sound learning, democracy, justice, among others--although each fraternity places a somewhat different emphasis on its principal teachings. Some fraternities have chosen to remain small: one has only six chapters; some have 150 chapters or more; one has more than 300 chapters established throughout the United States and Canada. Because of the special circumstances of their founding and subsequent growth, fraternities have taken on distinctive characteristics that set them apart one from another,

allowing each to develop its own identity and style of organization. These differences are manifested as well in the chapters that make up each fraternity, for although such general conditions as a common ritual and constitution, regional and national meetings, and various traditions and practices tend to unify the chapters, each one is deeply rooted in the culture of its own institution and locality. In no sense do fraternities form either a homogeneous mass or a monolith; in fact even to speak of a fraternity "system" is to impose a specious order on a loose confederation of widely varying groups.

Yet despite their acknowledged differences, American college fraternities have recognized the necessity of reaching a consensus on the major concerns that may affect them in common in 2000. Why their future should interest anyone not immediately involved in such groups must be considered, for in many minds the subject of fraternities often conjures up images of hazing, anti-intellectualism, discrimination, snobbery, arrogance, and conformity. No thoughtful observer, however sympathetic, can dismiss such charges out of hand; the truth is that perhaps all fraternities and their chapters have had at some point to combat destructuve attitudes and irresponsible conduct. Regrettable as such instances are, it is also true that these are aberrations in the usually commendable records of fraternities, and that most fraternity leaders, alumni and undergraduates alike, have worked strenuously to rid their organizations of that which would dishonor them.

Nonetheless, it is difficult for even the loyalist to speak out in their support without expressing some skepticism. In the best of all possible worlds the fraternity would truly be a voluntary association of equal but diverse persons who through their affinity with one another would affirm shared ideals and values in an ethos of mutual trust and respect. Rising above self-seeking individualism, each brother would foster the well-being of his fellows and in the process realize the full measure of his own potentiality. Insofar as any fraternity approaches that ideal, it deserves to be praised; conversely, any fraternity that thwarts or corrupts the humane development of the individual must be condemned.

It is unlikely that what the fraternity aspires to be will ever become entirely congruent with its reality, because the fraternity as it exists in different institutions varies greatly in relative size, influence, and character. By 2000 the relationship between the fraternity and the college or university may continue to be either "distant" or "close," depending on the importance both of them place on interdependence. If the relationship is to be "distant" the fraternity may merely coexist with the institution, receiving no special support or encouragement. If it is "close," the fraternity may be a fully recognized member in good standing of the academic community. In either case there will be a definable relationship that will clearly affect the fraternity's identity.

If the current trend toward instructional technology continues, many teachers and students alike will seek ways to overcome the impersonal, fragmentary nature of the institution. To the extent that the classroom, the faculty office, and the campus at large become the settings for rather matter-of-fact, mechanical transactions, the fraternity may offer itself as an alternative common ground for those who prize the personal encounters that imbue the process of teaching and learning with many of its greatest satisfactions.

Governmental Regulation

Given the accelerating rate of change in Western society, the question of whether government at every level will exercise an increasing degree of control over institutions can at best be only worried about. Governmental regulations will probably proliferate to affect more of the nation's economic life, energy use, security procedures, employment practices--indeed almost every conceivable aspect of both public and private life--so that higher education will necessarily become more deeply enmeshed in mandatory activities, limiting its power of initiative. Insofar as the fraternity is able to persist as a free, voluntary association of private individuals, it will exercise substantial control over the course of its own destiny. But the factors that will affect the operations of higher education--declines in tax revenues, enrollments, private

contributions, foundation support--will, of course, bear at least indirectly on the fraternity. In any event the fraternity is finally not the product of financial investment; it depends for its very life on whatever its members invest in it of their own loyalty, enthusiasm, affection, imagination--all the intangible gifts of humanity.

The Chapter House

Since the late nineteenth century the fraternity has been closely identified with a chapter house, so much so that the two have often seemed synonymous. As an alternative to a residence hall, apartment, or rooming house, the chapter house has proved an effective means of giving members a more concrete sense of unity and identity within the institution, although with the rise of "fraternity rows" members have sometimes found themselves not only physically separated from their fellow students but psychologically removed as well. Nonetheless, the establishment of a congenial place that satisfies one's need for a home has given the fraternity one of its main strengths and a distinctive advantage.

During the years after the Second World War until the mid-1960s many chapters throughout the country built houses to accommodate 60 to 100 members, and the related operation of kitchens and dining rooms expanded accordingly. It is unlikely that there will ever again be such

widespread construction of large-scale houses because building and maintenance costs, interest rates, and taxes may make it impossible. Moreover, many chapters are already finding their needs better served by smaller houses for 25 to 35 members, apartment complexes that permit more flexible arrangements of usable space, and lodges that provide meeting and recreation rooms as well as small-scale kitchen and dining facilities.

In every instance the fraternity will continue to need some place that is identifiably its own, which concretely manifests its presence on campus and the continuity of its existence at the institution. Whatever physical structure a fraternity must have as a center for its activities, it will have to be in proportion to the scale of the chapter's actual size, resources, and needs.

In some circumstances several fraternities may share an apartment building, dormitory complex, or fraternity center, much in the way that two or more congregations of different churches use the same building for their worship services and related activities. Such cooperative efforts may enable chapters to hold the line on raising food and maintenance costs without having to enlarge their memberships beyond a desirable size.

The operation of chapter housing may also be affected by numerous changes in academic calendars and programs. This may make it necessary to adjust to a variety of schedules that depart from

the traditional undergraduate calendar of four years broken evenly and predictably into semesters or quarters. Flexible college calendars, self-paced learning programs, external degree and continuing education programs, internships, and more resourceful uses of instructional facilities may well alter chapter house occupancy rates and indeed chapter life in general.

Programming

Ever since the days when the fraternity made its chapter meetings the occasion for topical debates, literary exercises, and philosophical discussions, the subject of programming has been central to its purposes. Formal presentations have given way to more casual, spontaneous exchanges, ranging from after-dinner conversations with faculty members and alumni to late-night bull sessions. In some instances the chapter arranges to have courses taught in the house, usually seminars or small discussion sections for its members as well as for other interested students. Occasionally, academic and cultural events are scheduled at a chapter house, at least in those chapters that emphasize their function as "residential learning centers."

More frequently, chapter programming comprises intramural sports, extracurricular activities, and the usual round of such social events as parties, dances, and dinners. In a broad sense the most

carefully designed form of programming that a chapter undertakes is fraternity education for its pledges. Although varying widely in many respects, the process of preparing pledges for their responsibilities as initiated members of the fraternity deals with such matters as fraternity history, study skills, self-government, conduct and manners, chapter house duties, service projects, and orientation to college.

It should be noted that the fraternity movement has worked to institute fraternity education programs in its chapters as a positive means of correcting the hazing that was once often associated with so-called pledge training. Despite the fact that hazing in whatever form is an outlawed practice, it still reoccurs from time to time in many chapters. The fraternity has yet to devise a completely effective way to prevent such outbreaks, and this menace makes it imperative that the integrity of the fraternity education program be strengthened and safeguarded.

During the last 25 years or so the fraternity, through inter-fraternity and national organizations, has stressed the development of leadership training programs at several levels, often through weekend or week-long sessions involving representatives from numerous chapters. These meetings deal with a wide range of subjects, including financial management, scholarship, alumni relations, rush, ritual, fraternity education, community service, and so on. The success of such conferences has often prompted chapters to organize their own

leadership training programs on a smaller scale. Some chapters have adopted the practice of holding weekend retreats once or twice a year for all their members as a means of clarifying their purposes and invigorating their sense of brotherhood.

Another kind of programming that may become increasingly important is informal career counseling, in which alumni are invited to discuss their occupations with undergraduates, offering free-ranging information and advice. Whether such programs can be effectively organized and sustained by the chapter is hard to say. Like other kinds of programming, its success depends on whether it is actually needed and wanted.

Diversity and Selectivity

Most fraternity chapters will probably not be in the vanguard of campus reform, experimentation, or innovation, because their very presence, based as it is on tradition and continuity, predisposes them to gradual, conservative acceptance of change. All the same fraternities have the capacity to adapt themselves to new conditions, especially as they come to realize that such developments will eventually work a positive effect on their communal life. By 2000 some chapters, but surely not all, may routinely pledge and initiate women as members in full standing, as several fraternities have already done over the past 130 years, but usually in special cases.

Although most chapters will continue to draw the majority of their members from the 18-22 age group, they may also initiate older undergraduate, graduate, professional, and special students. A few chapters may be largely made up of older students who have common interests--which might even make such fraternities appealing to some faculty members.

Hence by the year 2000 a chapter might well be made up of a few members in their thirties and forties, younger women and men, and a number of persons of varying ethnic, religious, social, and economic backgrounds, reflecting in many respects the diversity of the college population. On the other hand, for every chapter that is heterogeneous in composition, probably ten times that many will continue to be relatively homogeneous, indicating the will of the membership or the nature of a given institution. In any case it is improbable that fraternities will repeat the struggles of the 1950s and '60s when many of them responded evasively or wrongly to the issue of racial discrimination.

As a result of that controversy, those fraternities whose constitutions contained discriminatory clauses were compelled to repeal them. Many fraternities, of course, had never had such formal restrictions, but in the main the inclusion of persons from minority groups was uncommon in most chapters.

At present fraternity chapters in general are trying to broaden the composition of their memberships so that no person will be excluded because of accident of birth. Consequently, the opportunity to join a fraternity, or to decline the invitation, should be equally and democratically available.

With the clearing away of old barriers the process of selecting members has not changed radically. Like any other self-perpetuating organization, the fraternity chapter consists of fallible human beings who choose their fellow members on a subjective and rather casual basis. That one person should even presume to judge another in that way--even if the aspirant has submitted voluntarily--strikes many as deplorably unjust and blatantly élitist. If the current egalitarian and populist trends grow in force, any organization that arbitrarily selects its members will be subjected to harsh criticism and fierce opposition.

Ideally, the standards that the fraternity might use to choose its members are those that Thomas Jefferson proposed for a "natural aristocracy": talent and virtue. Few chapters, if any, have been able to operate according to these high-minded criteria; many, merely to survive at all, have had to take whomever they could get. A chapter looks for certain general qualities in the persons it rushes as prospective members: congeniality, academic ability, presentable appearance, special talents and interests, strength of character, vitality, amiability, among others. Perhaps most desirable of all

is the mysterious factor of promise; not merely one's potentiality for excellent achievement, but one's capacity for friendship and loyalty over the course of an entire lifetime, for the steady ripening of character and personality.

Obviously, no one person can be wise enough to perceive in another all these qualities in whatever combination, especially on brief acquaintance. The best a chapter can hope for is that its collective judgment--the intuitions, feelings, sympathies, and biases of its individual members--will enable it to make sensible and fortunate choices, and that the persons whom it desires as members will in turn wish to join. It is evident that this intensely subjective process is fraught with errors and misunderstanding, and that these can cause bitter disappointment, there being no absolutely equitable means of choosing a few persons among many. But whenever persons have been arbitrarily assigned to a chapter or even parceled out by means of a lottery, the results have been far less satisfactory. Finally, it must be the responsibility of the members themselves acting upon their own best judgment to select those whom they wish to have as their friends.

The quirky business of membership selection has sometimes led to chapters in which one particular element seems predominant; hence there are said to be "jock houses," "rich boys' fraternities," or chapters filled with "activities majors," "grade-grinds," or

"face-men." Although some chapters appear to attract or prefer a certain sort of person, most of them are in fact made up of assorted individuals who defy stereotyping. The fraternity will probably meet its most demanding challenge when it must deal with the fact of diversity. In relative terms the fraternity has always been made up of strikingly different individuals, but the range from which those persons are drawn has often been rather limited, usually reflecting the composition of the college.

If and when its members become increasingly varied in age, social and economic backgrounds, academic preparation and interests, ethnic and religious influences, and even character and personality, the fraternity will have to discover or create a dynamic compelling enough to integrate such a broad compass of persons into itself. No single method will solve the problem of diversity, but it is possible that the conventional elements of fraternity--universality of ritual, warmth of fellowship, vitality of traditions, authenticity of commitment to brotherhood and service--may transcend whatever incidental differences separate the members of a chapter. The idea of fraternity has always involved risking oneself to some extent, for there can be no certainty that an openness to others will necessarily bring about intimacy, trust, and respect. Any fraternity chapter is a continuous experiment in human relations, the outcome of which is rarely a complete success. There is no guarantee that each generation of

members will renew the spirit of fraternity, and yet, almost always, the chapter does regenerate itself by striving to achieve a sense of community.

THE FRATERNITY AND THE INDIVIDUAL

Although the fraternity does well to consider on what terms it will get along with the academic community in the years to come, it must give even greater thought to what it should mean to those persons who will be its members. No one can say for sure what each person actually gains, or even hopes to gain, from the experience of fraternity; the interplay of different personalities within the framework of the chapter can bring out the individual's best qualities and his worst, forcing him to confront himself realistically. The structure that the fraternity tends to form about the life of the member can give him a concrete awareness of the tension between freedom and responsibility. If such circumstances test him thoroughly, he can become surer of himself and his abilities, annealed by the challenges he has met and mastered.

The direct influence of the fraternity and their active participation in it end for many persons with the completion of college. For them the fraternity experience is something they feel they have outgrown, a phase of life that may have been good while it lasted, but

now seems somehow irrelevant. But for many other alumni the fraternity symbolizes the friendships that last far beyond the college years, growing steadily firmer and warmer. Accordingly, the values of the fraternity can transcend the limits of youth to endure throughout life. At its best the fraternity, for student and alumnus alike, is a humanizing agency, fostering kindness, generosity, and compassion.

Paideia

Whether or not American higher education ever achieves anything resembling consensus on the matter, the fraternity will remain committed--as indeed it has always been--to the task of helping students develop themselves as whole human beings, not merely as academic performers. In this endeavor the fraternity carries out what is most legitimately classical in its heritage: the paideia, the educative tradition of Greek antiquity, which attempts to shape individual character in relation to the values and ideals of human excellence.

Although the latterday version of paideia, at least as practiced by the fraternity, is less comprehensive and extensive, there still persists the idea of an education that affirms the innate worth of the individual and seeks to cultivate the student in every dimension. It may seem ironic to some that the fraternity should fall one of the

principal heirs to this strain of the classical legacy, partly by default and partly by right. This state of affairs has come about largely because so many colleges and universities, whether through expedience or necessity, have lost the unifying sense of humanistic purpose that once informed their whole existnece. In an age when the academy has come to profess "value-free" empiricism, relativism, or quantification, it is not surprising that the fraternity with its commitment to standards, values, and personal development should have a renewed appeal. Whatever its faults, the American fraternity movement has steadily upheld the cause of an education liberal and vital enough to respond effectively to human needs.

Fostering Well-Being

Although fraternity chapters may not concern themselves explicitly with the formal humanistic disciplines, they will increasingly become "workshops" in the applied humanities--a function they have generally carried out since their inception. Unless chapters become solemnly self-conscious about what they have done naturally, much of the ordeal of the rites of passage will come about in the company of friends who mutually accept and support one another. In most cases, this will happen because of the positive influence of the fraternity; in others it will have to happen in spite of the fraternity.

Recently, some fraternity education programs have adopted a few of the techniques of sensitivity training, transactional analysis, encounter groups, and other humanistic psychology/human relations efforts. Despite the hazards inherent in such amateur psychologizing, these developments are making fraternity members aware of the need to take seriously the task of becoming sensitive to human needs and feelings. Fraternity members are learning to respond helpfully to one another, and in the process they are coming to know themselves all the better. More often than not, the dynamics of the chapter are in the normal course of things more therapeutic than formal programs.

If the modern malaise in its many forms--alienation, anomie, depression, rootlessness, and suicide--continues to worsen among students bewildered by the complexity of society, then the fraternity will have to equip itself to deal as competently as it can with the problems of its members. No chapter can presume to act as a clinic, but responsible members can learn to use the full resources of the university and the entire community to find the best help available.

Even more important, the fraternity chapter can create an atmosphere of fellow-feeling, acceptance and support, trust and respect in which each member can gain a sense of well-being. By 2000 the fraternity may well be one of the few continuing agencies left in higher education in which such genuinely human experiences still exist.

Self-Government

Long before student government was instituted at colleges and universities, the fraternity chapter was functioning according to the principles of self-government--of, by, and for students. Fraternity members actually possess the power to govern themselves, electing their own officers and administering their affairs as they themselves see fit. In the face of the powerlessness that has driven so many students within the "multiversity" to despair, the fraternity offers far more than consolation: it provides opportunities for students to gain control over the immediate, external conditions in which they must live their lives.

This freedom to lead one's own life without having to be supervised directly by university authorities was first a privilege claimed by fraternity members who wanted to prove that they were responsible enough to govern their own conduct. Relying on the self-control of the individual member and on the standards enforced by the entire membership, the fraternity was eventually able to assert the right of self-government, which in turn helped do away with the institution's policy of extreme paternalism. Each fraternity chapter still remains answerable for many of its actions to the administration of the university, to the interfraternity council, and to the alumni and the governing bodies of its own general fraternity, so that its

authority is never absolute or autonomous. Nonetheless, the chapter is charged with maintaining order, discipline, and proper standards of conduct among its members, knowing that its integrity as a self-governing unit is based on its ability to act responsibly.

Chapter Management

Since the late nineteenth century the operation of the chapter house has been a major responsibility for many undergraduate members. Such duties as running the kitchen and dining room, keeping up the house and grounds, paying bills, making rent payments to the house corporation, contracting for repairs and improvements, and arranging for special events all involve members in a wide range of practical decisions that require them to act efficiently and responsibly. The business of managing a chapter house, of necessity, makes individual members assume direct responsibility for a complex and demanding enterprise in which they participate as active agents, not as passive observers. Even if by 2000 chapter houses become smaller or rarer, there will still be such duties as the handling of funds, the managing of available resources, and the dispatch of business that accompany any corporate activity, and these obligations will continue to afford fraternity members first-hand experience in the work of the world.

Whether a chapter lives in a conventional setting or is dispersed throughout the community, the opportunities for both leadership and stewardship, for learning to acquire and apply useful skills, will remain constant. The functioning of the chapter obliges its members to work well in every aspect of its operation. In carrying out whatever duties are theirs, fraternity members develop their own styles of working, solving problems, making adjustments, dealing with people, and trying to gain successful results. Within the setting of the fraternity, although each person is expected to do his part, the member is allowed a wider margin of error than other organizations in the larger society might permit; he is entitled to fail at a job without being severely penalized. Other members may chide him for errors in judgment or performance, but he can try again, knowing that his friends will still accept him for what he is. After all the chapter is made up of youths in various stages of inexperience, ignorance, and uncertainty. It is within the sympathetic climate of fraternity that such persons have the chance, theirs by right of membership, to gain the experience, the knowledge, and the confidence to meet the world on its own terms.

Service

If fraternities over the years had confined themselves to meeting only the needs of their own members, their detractors might have been somewhat justified in accusing them of self-indulgence. Many fraternity chapters are regularly involved in helping to support charitable organizations and projects--most, presumably, for disinterested reasons; some, regrettably, for the sake of publicity. In the years to come it is likely that the corporate involvement of an entire chapter in such projects will lessen, but that individual members will work in whatever activities they can, according to their own skills and interests.

Although there is a notion that fraternities owe their communities a certain amount of free labor as a means of justifying their existence, it will be individual members who give their time to work as volunteers in youth recreation programs, projects for the retarded and the disabled, emergency rescue squads, fund-raising drives, and any other civic activity in which they can be of help. The habit of voluntary service once acquired is hard to give up, and the fraternity members who as undergraduates have realized "the great joy of serving others" will probably become community leaders and stewards, accepting the responsibility for improving the quality of life wherever they make their homes. Clearly, the ethic of service is nothing new in

the history of the fraternity, but it has been reaffirmed enthusiastically in recent years and will likely become even more prominent in the fraternity in years to come.

Ritual

While fraternity members lead divergent lives, they are united as equals in a special community of shared values, brought together by their loyalty and friendship. What further binds them is the ritual, which expresses through symbol and myth the philosophical or religious meaning of the fraternity. Not all chapters stress the importance of the ritual to the same extent, and in some instances it is little heeded or used, if at all. But for a good many members the spiritual basis of the fraternity evokes a profound reverence that confirms their feeling of brotherhood.

The secrecy that shields the rituals of most fraternities is neither mystification for its own sake nor an archaic defense against intruders. Actually, the few secrets that fraternities possess--Greek mottoes, passwords, signs, and gestures--are merely the tokens by which a member proves that he can keep his word and is worthy of whatever trust his brothers may place in him. Most of the secrets are in the public domain as the common legacy of the Judeo-Christian, Greco-Roman traditions: sentiments, ideals,

precepts, admonitions, principles--the lessons of human wisdom that have been transmitted from civilization to civilization, from age to age.

Each fraternity expresses its own secrets through its unique rituals and ceremonies, but all fraternities share a common heritage that in essence affirms the innate worth of the human being, the dignity of the human spirit, and the transcendent value of human love.

Alumni

If these rituals are to have any extended meaning, they must be borne out in the lives of those who have accepted them as beliefs. Thus the ultimate exemplars of fraternity are not the undergraduates who form the college chapters for a few short years, but rather the alumni whose mature character reveals most tellingly the true nature of the fraternity. By 2000 it is hoped that a growing number of alumni will be drawn into greater involvement with undergraduates at all levels of fraternity activity, offering guidance and support to the younger members and in turn gaining a renewed sense of fellowship.

While the chapter has been the setting for undergraduate activity within the fraternity, older members have generally continued to participate through alumni organizations. Few alumni organizations have been able to sustain themselves apart from a strong alliance with an undergraduate chapter. Alumni have served

as faculty and chapter advisors, and as officers and members of house corporation boards in addition to their work as regional and national officers of the general fraternity. Over the years some chapters have been burdened with ineffectual alumni who have hung on rather pathetically, much to the dismay of those who expect stronger, more exemplary representation from the alumni at large.

It is likely that the chapters will become the focal point for alumni as well as undergraduate activity in the years to come, opening the experience of fraternity more widely to the interplay of several generations. As more alumni are readily welcomed by the undergraduates in such common concerns as informal career counseling, service projects, academic and professional programs, and house corporation affairs, the continuity of the fraternity throughout every stage of one's life may become all the more vital. Alumni may involve themselves more directly in fraternity education programs, sharing as much as they can of their own experiences with pledges and actives alike.

Overall, both the general fraternity and the chapter will strengthen their efforts to interest alumni, who may, in turn, be willing in greater numbers to invest themselves in so personally rewarding a venture. Although by 2000 the fraternity movement will have expanded steadily, adding new chapters and new members to its numbers, the greatest single source of strength may well be the

renewed or reclaimed interest of alumni who will want to take part once again in the life of the fraternity.

The alumni of the future will most certainly be called on to support the chapter financially to some extent, just as they have been asked to do in the past. But far more important than their financial contributions will be whatever they can give of themselves as persons to help the younger members understand the lasting value of fraternity. How generously the alumni of 2000 respond to that invitation will greatly determine the real strength and significance of the fraternity in years to come.

Anyone who ponders the future might bear in mind the words of Walter Lippmann: "Our civilization can be maintained and restored only by remembering and rediscovering the truth, and by re-establishing the virtuous habits on which it was founded. There is no use looking into the blank future for some new and fancy revelation of what man needs in order to live. The revelation has been made. . ."

In light of that, it should be noted that most of what has been said here is less an attempt to foresee what may be the fraternity's situation in 2000 than it is to reconsider the past and to make some sense of the present. Any discussion of the fraternity, so it seems, requires a justification of the institution or, more positively, an interpretation. That, in part, is the result of trying to bring

coherence--really, unanimity--to a subject whose reality is considerably more various and diffuse than has been adequately acknowledged.

Throughout this statement the phrase, "the fraternity," has been used as if generalizations could be derived fairly well from the widely varied, sometimes contradictory behavior of 75 quite different organizations. If this device had not been used, there might well have been an infinite regress of qualifications and exceptions. As noted earlier, the American fraternity movement, regardless of how uniform it may appear to be, is almost as divergent in the groups that make it up as the National Council of Churches, the AFL-CIO, or the Chamber of Commerce. In fact there are significant differences among its member organizations on matters of size, style, extension, membership, government, administration, scholarship, ritual, and perhaps personality and character.

For this reason the views expressed here represent in most instances a rather tentative compromise or at least something approaching a middle position. All the same there are several conclusions that do express a sense of the meeting, and these matters of consensus are as follows:

a. Fraternities will generally be strong and vital in 2000;

b. Fraternities will be able to adapt themselves effectively to major changes in both higher education and in American society at large;

c. Fraternities will continue to maintain some definite, probably positive relationship with academic institutions;

d. Fraternities will continue to affirm their essential principles and traditions;

e. Fraternities will continue to be self-governing groups;

f. Fraternities will center their activities in some physical locus at an institution, but not necessarily a chapter house;

g. Fraternities will increasingly receive support through the involvement of their alumni;

h. Fraternities will continue to provide important experiences in leadership training;

i. Fraternities will continue to serve as important agencies for personal development;

j. Fraternities will strengthen their identities as communities of shared values;

k. Fraternities will continue their commitment to the ethic of service;

l. Fraternities will gradually become more diverse and heterogeneous in their memberships;

m. Fraternities will continue to base their existence on the lessons of their rituals.

If these prophesies come true, the American fraternity movement will indeed flourish as a vital force in higher education, enabling its members to enrich the quality of their own lives and preparing them to serve society to the very best of their abilities. However its structures evolve in response to new circumstances, the fraternity will preserve its basic integrity, holding fast to its basic principles and traditions.